

DIONYSIUS OF THE NATIVITY (Peter Berthelot, 1600-38)
Blessed, martyr, priest (D)

REDEMPTUS OF THE CROSS (Thomas Rodriguez, 1598?-1638)
Blessed, martyr (D)

Peter Berthelot was born at Honfleur (Calvados, France) on Dec. 12, 1600, and as a young man went to sea, visiting Spain, England and America. In 1619 he went to India, where, as cosmographer and first pilot of the kings of France and of Portugal, he distinguished himself by his valor and genius. Proof of the latter are his Maritime Tables, sketched with great ability and preserved in the British Museum (Ms. Sloan 197). In 1635, while in Goa, he took counsel with his spiritual director, Father Philip of the Most Trinity, and consequently joined the Discalced Carmelites. He made his profession on Dec. 25, 1636, with the name of Dionysius of the Nativity. He was ordained a priest on Aug. 24, 1638. According to the testimony of the same Father Philip, he was an example of virtue to all the religious, both in the novitiate and after his profession. He was graced with the gift of contemplation; and more than once during prayer he appeared surrounded by heavenly splendors.

In 1638, the Viceroy Peter da Silva sent Francis de Souza de Castro as ambassador to the sultan of Achén (Sumatra). The ambassador wished to have Dionysius with him as a spiritual guide as well as a maritime expert and someone versed in the Malayan language. Father Dionysius, in turn, took as his companion Thomas Rodriguez, who had been born in Portugal about 1598 and joined the Carmelites as a lay brother, with the name of Redemptus of the Cross.

The two left Goa with the delegation on Sept. 25, 1638, and after a successful voyage arrived at Achén on Oct. 25. The joy with which they were received was feigned; they were soon made prisoners. Dionysius and Redemptus were tormented and tried more than the others, for the purpose of making them renounce their Catholic faith and embrace Islam. While in prison, Dionysius deprived himself even of necessities in his charity for others, whom he strengthened by his words, his help and his example. Both were condemned to death: Redemptus was one of the first to die, while Dionysius was martyred last, as he himself desired, in order to be able to strengthen the others. He was killed on Nov. 29, 1638, by a sword-blow that split his head in two. Both Carmelites were beatified by Pope Leo XIII on June 10, 1900; and their feast is celebrated by both branches of the Order on Nov. 29.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: The best qualified witness is the Ven. Father Philip of the Most Holy Trinity (1603-71), who, as superior at Goa, knew Bl. Dionysius intimately and worked zealously for his cause; he also worked for the canonical processes. Among the works in which he speaks of the Blessed, see especially: *Itinellarium orientale* Lyon 1649, passim; *Historia Carmelitani Ordinis*, ibid. 1656; *Summa theologiae mysticae*, ibid. 1656; *Theologia carmelitana*, Rome 1665. V. Inoltre: *Spiridione dell'Immacolata, Vita*, Milan 1900; *Positio beatificationis sett declarationis martyrii*, Rome 1900; Enrico della S. Famiglia, *Recherch.es... sur le b. Denis de la Nativity*, in *Mudes carmelitaines*, III

(1913), pp. 215-27 387-97; P. Gontier. *Vie admirable de Pierre Berthelot*, Paris 1917; 215-27, 387-97; Ambrogio di S. Teresa, *Nomenclator missionariorum O.C.D.*, Rome 1944, pp. 115-16; Maria das Dores Paes de Sande e Castro, *O beato Redento da Cruz*, Carm. desc; 2.» ed. Lisbon 1958.

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